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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sub-Commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities
Fiftieth session
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REVIEW OF FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN FIELDS WITH WHICH THE SUB-COMMISSION HAS BEEN OR MAY BE CONCERNED

Contribution from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

I. UNESCO NORMATIVE INSTRUMENTS

A. Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (1960)

1. Since the adoption of the Convention and Recommendation, six consultations of member States on the implementation of both instruments have been conducted. At its twenty-seventh session the General Conference decided to initiate the sixth consultation in order to enable the organization to measure the progress achieved and the remaining obstacles. Member States were requested to provide information on measures taken to avoid situations which may lead to unintentional discrimination or unequal treatment and in particular to report on specific measures to discourage women and girls from dropping out of school and to encourage them to pursue studies within the fields which traditionally are occupied by men and boys. In the case of persons belonging to minorities, refugees and indigenous people, the main issue was whether or not they benefit from equal access to education.

2. Forty-four member States submitted their national reports within the sixth consultation. The Executive Board at its one hundred fifty-second session (Paris, October 1997) considered the progress report (doc. 152 EX/20) and invited member States which had not fulfilled their obligations with regard to the Convention and Recommendation to do so, with a view to drafting the final report on the sixth consultation to be submitted to the General Conference in the Autumn of 1999.

B. Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice (1978)

3. In the context of the Third United Nations Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination (1993-2003), UNESCO published The Struggle against Discrimination. A Collection of International Instruments Adopted by the United Nations System (1997).

4. In 1997, a pilot project addressing the issue of prevention of violence in schools was carried out in Echirolles, France. As a result the children participants wrote a book entitled Different, not Indifferent which was launched on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 21 March 1998.

5. During the biennium 1996-1997, three regional workshops have been organized respectively in Africa, Europe and Latin America with a view to exploring intercultural dialogue in order to overcome discrimination based on ethnic and cultural grounds particularly relevant to the three regions.

6. In cooperation with the European Youth Forum, a working group on non-discrimination, racism, and xenophobia was held during the second World Youth Forum of the United Nations System (Vienna, 1996).

C. Declaration of Principles on Tolerance (1995)

7. On the day of the fiftieth anniversary of UNESCO, 16 November 1995, UNESCO adopted a Declaration of Principles on Tolerance which stipulates that "particular attention should be paid to vulnerable groups which are socially or economically disadvantaged so as to afford them the protection of the laws and the social measures in force, in particular with regard to housing, employment and health, to respect the authenticity of their culture and values, and to facilitate their social and occupational advancement and integration, especially through education".

8. In 1995, UNESCO furthermore declared 16 November the annual International Day for Tolerance. This day serves as an occasion to organize educational activities which may be covered by the media in order to promote tolerance and to create awareness about the problems of minorities and other vulnerable groups.

D. Declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generations Towards Future Generations (1997)

9. As a major result of the reflection on the new trends of international law in the fields of competence of UNESCO, the General Conference adopted at its twenty-ninth session the Declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generations Towards Future Generations. The Declaration states in article 11 that "The present generations should refrain from taking any action or measure which would have the effect of leading to or perpetuating any form of discrimination for future generations."

II. GENDER-RELATED ISSUES

10. One of the organization's priority areas is women. In this context, UNESCO launched an international campaign to sensitize the media and to mobilize international NGOs regarding women's rights. This was done within the framework of the International Day for Women (8 March 1998). In the shape of a Passport for Equality, UNESCO disseminated 15,000 copies of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Passport was furthermore distributed to UNESCO regional offices so as to allow the national associations to join the campaign.

11. A UNESCO Expert Group Meeting on Male Roles and Masculinities in the Perspective of a Culture of Peace was held in Oslo in 1997. The meeting will be followed by other activities emphasizing, among others, gender-sensitive curricula and teaching material.

12. UNESCO furthermore examined the question of sexist stereotypes and undertakes activities to educate professionals about the causes and consequences of the phenomenon of sexist stereotypes. As regards language as a vehicle for social stereotypes, UNESCO is preparing the second edition of its guide on non-sexist language. The guide provides practical advice and succinct explanations regarding fundamental concepts necessary to understand the policy of equality of men and women.

13. UNESCO has invested in a communication network with a view to preventing discrimination against and to empower women. The network includes teachers (FAWE), journalists (WOMMED), artists (REUNIR), intellectuals and scientists (Collectif Mahgreb Egalité) and political actors.

III. PUBLICATIONS

14. In order to provide basic knowledge on and texts of international human rights instruments including those related to discrimination, UNESCO published and disseminates publications such as: UNESCO and Human Rights - Standard-Setting Instruments, Major meetings, Publications, Major International Human Rights Instruments (status as at 31 May 1997).